

256I.9 School ready children grant program.

1. The state board shall develop and promote a school ready children grant program which shall provide for all of the following components:

a. Identify the performance measures that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the school ready children grants, including the amount of early intellectual stimulation of very young children, the basic skill levels of students entering school, the health status of children, the incidence of child abuse and neglect, the level of involvement by parents with their children, and the degree of quality of an accessibility to child care.

b. Identify guidelines and a process to be used for determining the readiness of an early childhood Iowa area board for administering a school ready children grant.

c. Provide for technical assistance concerning funding sources, program design, and other pertinent areas.

2. The state board shall provide maximum flexibility to grantees for the use of the grant moneys included in a school ready children grant, including but not limited to authorizing an area board to use grant moneys to pay for regular audits required pursuant to section 256I.5, subsection 1, if moneys distributed to an area board for administrative costs are insufficient to pay for the required audits.

3. A school ready children grant shall, to the extent possible, be used to support programs that meet quality standards identified by the state board. At a minimum, a grant shall be used to provide all of the following:

a. Preschool services provided on a voluntary basis to children deemed at risk.

b. (1) Family support services and parent education programs promoted to parents of children from zero through age five. Family support services shall include but are not limited to home visitation. Of the state funding that an area board designates for family support programs, at least sixty percent shall be committed to programs with a home visitation component.

(2) It is the intent of the general assembly that priority for home visitation program funding be given to programs using evidence-based or promising models for home visitation.

c. Other services to support the strategic plan developed by the state board.

d. Services to improve the quality and availability of all types of child care. The services may include but are not limited to making nurse consultants available to support quality improvement.

4. a. A school ready children grant shall be awarded to an area board annually, as funding is available. Receipt of continued funding is subject to submission of the required annual report and the state board's determination that the area board is measuring, through the use of performance measures and community-wide indicators developed by the state board with input from area boards, progress toward and is achieving the desired results and other results identified in the community plan. Each area board shall participate in the levels of excellence rating system to measure the area's success. If the use of performance measures and community-wide indicators does not show that an area board has made progress toward achieving the results identified in the community plan, the state board shall require a plan of corrective action, withhold any increase in funding, or withdraw grant funding.

b. The state board shall distribute school ready children grant moneys to area boards with approved comprehensive community plans based upon a determination of an early childhood Iowa area's readiness to effectively utilize the grant moneys. The grant moneys shall be adjusted for other federal and state grant moneys to be received by the area for services to children from zero through age five.

c. An area board's readiness shall be determined by evidence of successful collaboration among public and private early care, education, health, and human services interests in the area or a documented program design that supports a strong likelihood of a successful collaboration between these interests. Other criteria which may be used by the state board to determine readiness and funding amounts for an area include one or more of the following:

(1) The levels of excellence rating received by the area.

(2) Evidence of the area's capacity to successfully implement the services in the area's community plan.

(3) Local public and private funding and other resources committed to implementation of the community plan.

(4) The adequacy of plans for commitment of local funding and other resources for implementation of the community plan.

d. The provisions for distribution of school ready children grant moneys shall be determined by the state board.

e. The amount of school ready children grant funding an area board may carry forward from one fiscal year to the succeeding fiscal year shall not exceed twenty percent of the grant amount for the fiscal year. All of the school ready children grant funds received by an area board for a fiscal year which remain unencumbered or unobligated at the close of a fiscal year shall be carried forward to the succeeding fiscal year. However, the grant amount for the succeeding fiscal year shall be reduced by the amount in excess of twenty percent of the grant amount received for the fiscal year.

2010 Acts, ch 1031, §286; 2011 Acts, ch 132, §10, 11, 106

[SP] If sufficient funding is available, eligibility for preschool tuition assistance may be extended to children with a family income in excess of the basic income eligibility requirement; 2011 Acts, ch 132, §5, 102, 106; 2012 Acts, ch 1132, §5

[SP] Implementation of legislative intent regarding priority for home visitation program funding; 2012 Acts, ch 1132, §5; 2012 Acts, ch 1133, §2